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Verses

BY

May Hayden Taylor Wilson,

October, 1871—January, 1895.



"For lovelier than ever, she hath soared
With angel hosts, before my inward eye.
Tow'rd the feet of our ever-living Lord."

—Petrarch.

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W. T. W.

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In choosing from many bits of rhyme, a few for publication, it has been difficult to decide what might be used. Verses for the home festivals were filled with loving words and quaint jests, but some would not be clearly understood, while others brought too many tears with the smiles.

The quick wit, the fun, the affection of a brief lifetime can be followed in these lines. Often they were thrown together carelessly, and left unchanged as the occasion passed. But now, to those who loved her, they form a sweet record of the days that are no more.

Before her marriage Maysie arranged in a little book all the verses addressed to her sister, and wrote the dedication which so fitly opens this collection.

By those who loved her, and to whom her sweet, unselfish spirit has been an inspiration, this little volume is given to her friends.

DEDICATION.

To many friends, in many moods,
My rhyming lines are written,
Sometimes in earnest, sometimes by
Poetic fervor smitten.
And never yet, in prose or verse,
Have I the Muse arrested,
But that the effort held some line
Or thought by you suggested.
So, sweetheart, take the verses, with
This loving dedication—

TO
BROWN-EYED EDITH
WHO HAS BEEN
MY DEAREST INSPIRATION

October, 1894.

To Papa.

These lines were traced in childish writing on the pink tissue leave of a shaving-paper case. The cover, of silver cardboard crossed with blue silk, was one of the first efforts of the little hands that afterwards grew so skillful in all kinds of dainty work.

When to smooth your chin you try,
Pray remember it was I
Who cut this paper, or did try, my father
And made this case of silver fine
All for you, father mine;
And trimmed it all with lovely blue
To match the sky, and birds' eggs too,
In the sweetest summer weather.

Pink as the sunset, blue as the sky,
Silver as dew-drops, now you and I—
Which is the happiest, papa or May,
On this gladdest Christmas Day?

(*Christmas, 1879.*)

Buttons and Bags.

Grandmamma dear, I very much fear,
That while you are traveling so far and so near,
Some day you'll find out, I haven't a doubt,
That you've not a button, and what will you do?
Fill up with all sizes this button-bag blue!
Now, here let me drop a bit of advice.
I know very well that it's not very nice
To advise older people; but I think you will find
That this is advice of the very best kind:
When on a tour through the country you go,
Take button-bag with you, and needles, to sew.

(*July, 1882.*)

To Edith—A Valentine.

I know a little lady,
Her name I will not tell;
But this I'm not ashamed to say—
I love her very well.

Her smile is bright as sunshine,
Her teeth are just like pearls,
And to me she is the sweetest
Of all the little girls.

She has a charming manner,
And a voice that's quite entrancing,
And a really most delightful way
Of skating and of dancing

As she's so very charming,
I hope it won't offend her
If I should take the liberty
This Valentine to send her

(February, 1885.)

A Commencement Ode.

Noble Wheaton, we, thy daughters,
Kneeling low before thy shrine,
Drink thy streams of living waters ;
All our gratitude is thine.

Here to-day we give thee honor,—
(Put that in the upper tray,)
And, my love, that's my Madonna
That you're banging round that way !

Many a heart its tribute bringing,—
(Turn that dress skirt inside out.)
Many a voice thy praises singing,—
(Yes, 'Twill break without a doubt.)

White-robed girls,—(my goodness gracious,
There my water pitcher goes!
Fate is pos'tively audacious,
Thus to add to all my woes.)

From beneath thy kind protection
Goes to-day a senior class,—
(Love, if you have no objection,
Just don't pack my looking glass.)

Who can speak in accents fitting
Of thy care and tenderness?—
(Do you know, my dear, you're sitting
On my new Commencement dress?)

Wheaton, thine shall be the glory
When—(Oh girls, how can I write
Anything in prose or story,
If you two stand there and fight !

It's clear if 'mid the tumult racking
I mean to leave this dear abode,
I'd better do my own trunk-packing,
And leave *you* girls to write the Ode.)

(Published June, 1889.)

VERSES FOR GRANDMAMMA'S CALENDAR, 1892.

(Each calendar slip was illustrated by the author.)

January 2.

The New Year's love
And its promise gay,
Have driven the old
Year's cares away.

But the old Year's love
And the old Year's mirth,
Live on unchanged by
The New Year's birth.

March 17

Thou know'st these hearts are firmly tied
With love's enduring twine ;
Thou know'st that, through thy spirit's power
These hearts are joined with thine ;
Thou know'st these youthful souls full well,
And spite of all their sins,
Thou know'st they love thee best of all—
These " Literary Twins." *

* K. C. O. and M. H. T.

May 1.

To-day when you think of the birds and the bees,
Of the blossoming flowers and the budding trees,
Of the blue Spring sky and the bright Spring weather,
And the sun and the showers that come together,
Dear!—once in a while let your fancy stray
To a girl whose name, like the month, is MAY.

June 20.

Fain would I sing as others do,
Songs of summer and love to you,
But the staff is broken,
My lute's unstrung,
The notes are scattered the lines among,
And deep in my heart is my song—unsung.

To K. C. O.

In the morning, Katie darling,
When the sun in splendor laughs,
And you clamber up to Cummins',
Just to see your photographs—
When you find that you have taken
Just as many wrong as right,
Will you think of me, my cousin,
As I think of you to-night?

In the afternoon, my Katie,
When you would a blue-print make,
And the sun—so disobliging—
 Will not shine for your sweet sake ;
When you put your print in water,
 And it isn't finished quite--
Will you think of me, oh Katie,
 As I think of you to-night ?

In the gloaming, dearest Katie,
When the lamps are soft and low,
And you watch the people passing
By your window, to and fro—
When you want to take a Kodak,
And there isn't any light—
Will you think of me, I wonder,
As I think of you to-night?

Morning, noon or evening, Katie,
When your Kodak meets your view,
When you long for sweet communion
With a loyal heart and true—
When the clouds are dark and dreary,
Or the days are clear and bright,
Think of me, and love me, Katie,
As I think of you to-night.

(*March, 1891.*)

Lullaby.

Dear little girl, good night, good night ;
The pretty birds in their nests are still ;
We watched the sun as he sank from sight
Over the tree tops on yonder hill.
Two stars have come since the daylight went,
'Way over there in the sky's dark blue ;
They must be angels God has sent
To watch my baby the whole night through.

Dear little girl, good night, good night,
I hear the frogs in the meadow call ;
They croak and croak in the evening light,
Down in the pond by the old stone wall.
I think, perhaps, they tell the flowers
Never to fear, though the world is dark ;
They know the firefly lights the hours
All night long with his cheerful spark.

Dear little girl, good night, good night.
 Dear little head with your silky hair ;
Dear little form that I hold so tight,
 Cosy and warm in the nursery chair ;
White lids veiling the eyes so clear—
 Over their blueness the fringes creep.
Slower and slower I rock you, dear ;
 My little girl, asleep—asleep !

(Written for the "little countess," South Carolina—Published October, 1894.)

A Valentine.

I gave you a piece of my heart one day—
You hadn't a cause to doubt it;
But you shouldn't have stolen it all away
For I'm lonely, dear, without it.

I'm used to going without it now,
I've almost ceased to mind it—
Except for an ominous aching void
That the heart has left behind it.

You've taken it all and it's yours for aye;
Your loves and your cares are double,
But, dear, do you need *two* hearts, and why,
When *one* is a world of trouble?

Framing the Picture.

I took your likeness, darling,
In happy summer hours ;
And then to frame it fitly
I wreathed it round with flowers,
But flowers died when winter came,
And so I sought a fairer frame.

I thought the planets worthy
To crown you as you are,
And so I took your likeness
And set it in a star.
But stars grow dim at morning ray—
Your face is with me all the day.

No frame I found, my darling,
In all the gems of art ;
And so I took your likeness
And put it in a heart—
For in my heart you reign alone,
My heart and I are all your own.

(*September, 1892.*)

Poem to Papa on His Birthday.

With a Chinese Idol.

June 11, 1891

This little man from a foreign clime,
Arrived this morning, just on time.
He came from a thousand miles away,
On purpose to be on hand to-day,
For even as far as far Chinee,
They've heard of the fame of M. S. T.

He brings, exclusive of classic smile,
Good wishes to last for an extra while ;
The Emperor sends his kind regards
And all the Chinamen send their cards.
He also brings much love from me—
Commonly known as M. H. T.

Verses with Christmas Gifts, 1892.

To Mother:

To those we love, 'tis hard in words, to give
The tender thoughts that in our hearts may live ;
So take this gift and let your fancy's play
Suggest the loving things we cannot say.

To Edith:

With a silver hair-pin.

My brown-eyed little lady,
 My comfort and my care,
Accept this pretty hair-pin,
 To hold your pretty hair.
And when your days are ended,
 I hope you'll find, my love,
A crown of silver hair-pins
 Awaiting you above.

To Grandmamma

In case your spirit, soaring high
 On filmy wings,
Elope with fancy from this sphere
 Of mundane things,
This chain will hold you down to earth
 Though light it be,
For it is weighted with the love
 Of children threc.

With a Gift.

The ties that bind my heart to you,
Are very firm and very true :
Yet use this clasp, dear, if you will,
To hold our heart-strings closer still :
For, loved one, as through life we go,
Our ties might sometimes slip, you know.

A Love Song.

When the summer's sun was bright, love,
And the world was fair and free,
And the soft moon shone at night, love,
Over the restless sea,
You came with wondrous charm, love,
On a happy summer day,
And with never a thought of harm, love,
You stole my heart away.

The summer days are dead, love,
And the world is white and chill.
And the moon is pale and cold, love,
And the birds' sweet songs are still.
But deep in my heart to-day, love,
Burns hope's undying gleam,
And hidden safely away, love,
Is the summer's blissful dream.

(Published November, 1893. Afterwards arranged
with music.)

A Winter Night.

Ever against my window pane
Wearily beats the winter rain ;
Brown stand the trees, and toss on high
Leafless branches against the sky,
And in the grey, uncertain light,
Drearly falls the winter night.

Low and ceaseless the sad winds sigh,
Mournfully crooning their lullaby,
Recklessly lifting, in fitful mirth,
Dead leaves up from the sodden earth,
Whirling them upwards out of sight,
Into the deepening winter night.

Here in my chamber the light is low,
And in the firelight's crimson glow,
Ghostly, flickering shadows fall
Over the curtains and on the wall,
Weird storm-spirits of phantom might,
Haunting the gloomy winter night.

Little I reck of the driving storm,
Scarce I notice the shadows form,
Sitting here in the firelight gleam,
Silent and happy, I think and dream—
Dreams of summer and love and light,
All untouched by the winter night

(Published 1894.)

Lilies.

Easter lilies, tall and white,
Softly bright !
Tell my love for me to-day
All those things that I would say
If I might.

Tell her that I love her, though
She will know.
Tell her that she holds for me
Life's divinest mystery—
Lilies, go !

She is tall and slender too,
 Pure as you.
And her maiden heart is free,
But if it should beat for me,
 I'd be true.

Will she frown that I with this
 Send a kiss?
In her hands I place to-day
All man's love can give or say
Send me, darling, what you may—
 Woe or bliss.

Published.

To Edith—On Her Fifteenth Birthday.

Softly blow the summer breezes,
In the grass the daisies nod,
Like a tarnished royal sceptre
Sways the half-ripe golden rod.
Underneath the cool green branches
Lie the shadows soft and grey,
And the birds, with happy carol,
Wish you every joy to-day.

All day long the golden sunbeams
Dance and flicker in the grass,
All day long a song of welcome
Nature breathes where'er you pass
And the tree tops bend above you,
And the roses nod and sway—
Every creature seems to love you
And to greet your natal day.

Down behind the purple hill tops
Drops the golden sun, to sleep ;
In the azure dome above you
Silver stars their watches keep.
And the evening breezes, sighing
By your window, seem to say,
" Sweetly sleep—the angels guard you :
Has it been a happy day ? "

From the heart of one who loves you
'Rose a little prayer to-day,
That the merciful all-Father
 Guard and keep you on life's way,
Till within His Heavenly Kingdom,
 With the thousands round His throne,
You shall spend a happier birthday
 Than on earth was ever known.

(*August 4, 1889.*)

Coquetry.

Sweet Clover out in the meadow grows
Under a sky serene.
Coquette and coy as the royal Rose,
Is this dainty field flower queen.
She bends and bows to the passing breeze,
She flirts with the grasses tall,
She courts the kiss of the honey-bees—
She woos and is wooed of all.

Sweet Clover tosses her fragrant head,
 'Mid suitors that faint and sigh—
The Bee and the Zephyr who long to wed,
 The Dew and the Butterfly.
She loves them all, but the fickle Miss
 Can never to one be true—
And sometimes, dear, I've thought, in this
 The Clover resembles *you*.

(*July, 1894.*)

A Song.

She :

You kissed me, dear, when you said "good night."
Under the full of the summer moon.
My soul was a maiden's, pure and white,
And free as the breath of the fragrant June :
But a woman's soul
Leaped forth to light
When you kissed me, dear,
As you said "good night."

He

I kissed you, dear, when I said "good night."
Your face was as fresh as a new-blown flower,
Your eyes were sweet with your soul's sweet light,
And I robbed your heart of its girlhood's dower
 But my darkened soul
 Grew strangely bright
When I kissed you, dear,
 As I said "good night."

(Published October, 1894.)

Accompanying a Kodak Story.

[Written for K. C. O.]

I.

Unlike the many writers
Who, on the title page,
Are wont to dedicate their work
To friends of youth or age,

I, feeling quite uncertain
Of what I have begun,
Will wait, before I dedicate,
Until my tale is done.

And if, when you have finished
My story, dearest friend,
You care to know for whom it is,
You'll find it at the end.

II.

Twin sister of my soul—my tale is ended,
A foolish little story, short and trite :
But if, perhaps, the dullness need be mended,
Your starry eyes will lend the pages light.

And if it lacks in sentiment and sweetness,
In this, at least, my spirit may rejoice :
No ear will ever note its incompleteness
If you but give the music of your voice.

So take it, Katie,—take my little story,
For at your word it started into life ;
And, though the pages lend the name no glory,
I dedicate it, dear, to Harry's wife.

Love and Life.

[SONG.]

Life is all too short for love, dear,
And the swift years fly away,
While the flowers are always springing
And the time is always May.
When the sky is blue above us
And the fragrant roses sway,
Life is all too short for love, dear,
As the swift years fly away.

Life is all too long for pain, dear,
When our love has gone away,
And the sad years pass us slowly
And the skies are dull and grey—
When the rose leaves all lie scattered,
And the weeping willows sway,
Life is all too long for pain, dear,
When sweet love has had its day.

(Arrangements of music were sent to Maysie by two composers, for a song which had appeared in Munsey's Magazine. One was already published. With the other came a note asking permission to use her words. In about twenty minutes she wrote these lines and sent them to the composer.)

Three Children.

To the Grace, May and Edith of long ago.

They played in a beautiful cloud-land,
Three children of by-gone years,
With never a care, or a thought to spare
 For the future's laughter and tears.
And one was a gay little school girl ;
 And one was a dreamer grave ;
And one was a gypsy with laughing eyes
 And hair in a chestnut wave.
And they lived in a beautiful cloud-land
 Till it happened, they knew not how,
From their kingdom of play, they wandered away
 And they never can find it now.

Oh, the mystical things that happened,
And the marvelous things they planned
Could never betide in the world outside
That magical wonder-land.
For one was a beautiful princess,
And one was a captive fair,
And one was a fairy in spangled gauze
With a wreath on her floating hair
And they peopled their cloud-land with beings
From all the tales they were told :
With lady and knight, and spirits of light
And fair ones with locks of gold.

'Tis years since the wonder-land vanished ;
 The three who were children then
Are facing the strife, and the lessons of life,
 In a world of women and men.
The princess has many a lover,
 The fairy charms with her wand,
And the dreamer lives in a land of dreams,
 Shut out from the life beyond.
But sometimes they sit in the twilight
 And talk with a smile and a sigh,
Of Wonder-land gay, that kingdom of play
 That vanished in days gone by.

(*July, 1894.*)

Corn Tassels.

She comes between the ripened ears—
The tall corn bows before its queen,
And in its whispering she hears
Sweet prophecies of joy unseen,
For her, Love's sweetest dream was born
Under the tassels of the corn.

The long green ribbons of the stalks
Caressing cling to gown and hair,
Unconscious of their touch she walks
And builds her castles in the air.
Love's first kiss came to her that morn
Under the tassels of the corn.

August 9, 1894.

Evensong.

Sunset glories fade in the west,
Grey stand the hills, and calm and blest,
Murmuring low in its tranquil rest,

Lies the sea.

Oh, Love, to thee,
Sweet sleep and dreamless rest.

Hark, the fisherman's distant call !
Slowly, solemnly, covering all,
Shade on shade, does the darkness fall.
Close thine eyes,
The daylight dies,
The night hides all.

See, the moon, with her silvery light,
Makes a pathway, shimmering, bright,
Over the waves, and through the night
Bright stars shine.
Oh, lady mine,
Sleep well ; good night !

Grown-up Land.

The children, oh, the children !
 'Twas only yesterday
We heard their merry voices ring,
 We watched them at their play.

And in the quiet reigning now
 We try to understand,
They must have crossed the mystic bridge
 That leads to Grown-up Land.

The children, oh, the children !
 We almost seem to see
The happy eyes, the floating hair,
 The faces full of glee.

We hear the childish pleadings sweet,
 We touch each little hand—
Just as we did before they found
 The way to Grown-up Land.

The children, oh, the children !
 We love them now as then ;
Our hearts are very tender toward
 Our women and our men.

But sometimes, as the years go by,
 Our longing souls demand
The little children that we loved,
 Who went to Grown-up Land.

(Published September, 1897.)

Rainbows.

The clouds came up on a summer day,
And covered a clear blue sky ;
They hid the face of the sun away,
While the sudden storm swept by ;
And the stricken flowers, when the fierce winds blew,
Bent low to the tempest's power ;
But they smiled, in spite of their tears of dew,
In the rainbow, after the shower.

The clouds come up when our life is bright,
And cover the sun away,
And the heart grows chill in the sudden night,
And longs for the vanished day ;
But the clouds pass by with the summer rain,
And then, like a storm-tossed flower,
The heart looks up, and is glad again,
In the rainbow, after the shower.

(Published.)

"Hope hears the ringing
Of birthday bells on high,
Faith, Hope and Love make
Answer with soft singing,—

— *Christina Rossetti.*





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